



TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC WORKS POLICY COMMITTEE

Highlights

June 4, 2026

ATTENDANCE

Members: Newell Arnerich (Chair); Chelsea Byers (Vice Chair); Andrea Alexander; Michael Barrett; Gregory Barton; Liz Becerra; Priya Bhat-Patel; John Campbell; Denise Davis; Mario Enriquez; Jim Ernst; Justin Ezell; Thomas Gaffery; Edward Giroux; Kirsten Graham; Shayra Hernandez; Kerry Hillis; Matt Jester; Mike Johnson; Linda Krupa; Jennifer Mendoza; Linda Molina; Kimberly Murdaugh; Paul Nagengast; Adolfo Ozaeto; John Peraza; Christian Punsal; Alonso Ramirez; Larry Spicer; Josh Steeber; John Taylor; Jennifer Torres-O'Callaghan; Alexander Trinidad; Bill Uphoff; Colleen Wallace

Cal Cities Partners: Haig Kartounian

Staff: Damon Conklin, Legislative Advocate
Waleed Hojeij, Policy and Legislative Affairs Analyst

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Arnerich and Vice Chair Byers thanked members for their participation and convened the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

II. Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

III. CEQA Ballot Initiative

Cal Cities staff presented an overview of the proposed Building an Affordable California Act (BACA), a November 2026 ballot initiative sponsored by the California Chamber of Commerce that would create an optional CEQA and Permit Streamlining Act pathway for projects defined as "essential projects." Staff explained that eligible projects include transportation infrastructure, local streets and highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit, water and wastewater projects, clean energy infrastructure, broadband deployment, and wildfire resilience projects. Staff highlighted both potential benefits and concerns for cities, noting that the measure could accelerate project delivery timelines and reduce litigation exposure while also creating a parallel CEQA process with new administrative responsibilities for local governments.

Representatives of the initiative's proponents, including the California Chamber of Commerce, public relations and legal counsel for the measure, argued that the proposal preserves local control while creating enforceable timelines, greater certainty in environmental review, and protections against costly and lengthy litigation. Proponents emphasized that the measure does not exempt projects from CEQA, does not override local zoning authority, and does not require cities to approve projects. They described the proposal as a modernization of the existing CEQA process that would help deliver housing and infrastructure projects more efficiently while maintaining environmental review and public participation.

Committee members also heard from opponents of the measure, including representatives Greenbelt Alliance and Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger on behalf of the Planning and Conservation League. Opponents raised concerns that the measure could apply broadly to major infrastructure and development projects, reduce city discretion, limit alternatives analysis, and create new litigation risks for cities. Also, opponents expressed concern that the measure would increase costs, create legal uncertainty, and make it more difficult for cities to impose protective conditions of approval.

Committee members raised questions regarding the measure's impact on local control, implementation in coastal communities, coordination with federal environmental review requirements, and potential liability for cities if environmental review timelines are shortened. Members also expressed interest in understanding how the initiative would affect city-led infrastructure projects and whether it would provide meaningful streamlining without shifting additional risk onto local governments.

Members of the Committee voted 22 ayes and 5 noes to recommend that the Cal Cities board oppose the ballot measure.

IV. Road Use Charge Update

Assembly Member Lori Wilson, Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee, joined the committee to discuss California's growing transportation funding crisis and the need to identify a sustainable long-term replacement for declining gas tax revenues. She emphasized that maintaining a safe, reliable, and multimodal transportation system is critical to California's economy and acknowledged that the shift toward more fuel-efficient and zero-emission vehicles has created significant challenges for the state's traditional transportation funding model.

Assembly Member Wilson highlighted the work of the Assembly Transportation Committee's Select Committee on Transportation Funding, which has been engaging stakeholders throughout the state to evaluate potential funding solutions. She stressed that no decisions have been made regarding a future road user charge but emphasized the importance of developing a funding approach that is equitable, transparent, and sustainable while ensuring local governments have the resources needed to maintain streets and roads. Committee members discussed the importance of continued collaboration between the Legislature, Caltrans, local governments, and transportation stakeholders as these conversations continue.

V. May Revise: Transportation Funding

Frank Jimenez of the Legislative Analyst's Office provided an overview of the Governor's May Revision and its implications for transportation funding. He reviewed the state budget process, discussed updated revenue estimates, and outlined major transportation-related proposals included in the May Revision.

The presentation highlighted the state's continued fiscal challenges and the resulting transportation funding reductions proposed by the administration. Discussion focused on the potential impacts to local transportation programs, particularly for jurisdictions

that rely heavily on state transportation revenues for road maintenance and capital improvements. Members discussed how funding reductions may disproportionately affect communities that lack dedicated local transportation revenue sources. Committee members also expressed interest in the long-term sustainability of transportation funding and the relationship between declining fuel tax revenues and future infrastructure needs.

VI. Caltrans Federal Update: Surface Reauthorization

Ryan Greenway, Assistant Federal Liaison for Caltrans, provided an update on federal transportation funding opportunities, implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and federal coordination efforts underway in preparation for the next federal surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Committee members received information regarding recently released federal Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), upcoming competitive grant opportunities, and technical assistance resources available to local agencies pursuing federal transportation funding. Caltrans staff also discussed recent federal administrative changes affecting competitive grant programs and encouraged local agencies to engage with Caltrans for assistance navigating evolving federal requirements.

Andrew Carhart, Federal Legislation Manager for Caltrans, provided an update on congressional efforts to develop the next federal surface transportation authorization measure. He summarized actions taken by the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, including consideration of the BUILD Act, and discussed potential funding levels, policy provisions, and ongoing federal negotiations. Members noted concerns regarding proposed reductions in guaranteed federal transportation funding and the increasing reliance on annual appropriations. Caltrans staff emphasized the importance of coordinated advocacy among California transportation stakeholders as Congress continues to work on reauthorization legislation.

VII. Legislative and Regulatory Update

Cal Cities staff provided an update on priority transportation, communications, and public works legislation, regulatory developments, and ongoing advocacy efforts. Staff discussed current transportation policy discussions occurring at both the state and federal levels and highlighted issues related to transportation funding, project delivery, infrastructure investment, and emerging mobility challenges.

Committee members were encouraged to continue engaging with Cal Cities staff on pending legislation and regulatory proposals affecting local governments. Discussion reinforced the committee's ongoing focus on preserving local authority, ensuring sustainable transportation funding, and supporting policies that improve the delivery of critical infrastructure projects throughout California.

VIII. Adjourn

Chair Arnerich and Vice Chair Byers thanked members and speakers for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Next Virtual Meeting: Staff will notify committee members by **August 7** if the policy committee meets in September. If you have any questions, please contact [Meg Desmond](#), Cal Cities Program Manager, Legislative Administration.

2016 Policy Committee Appointments

REMINDER: The 2015 policy committee appointments will end at the close of the Annual Conference; appointments for 2016 can be requested thereafter. Members seeking appointments for 2016 are urged to contact their incoming department, division, or affiliate president immediately following the Annual Conference to request reappointment. A presidential appointment from the League's incoming president may also be requested, although members are encouraged to first exhaust appointment opportunities through their division or department presidents. These requests should be sent c/o Meg Desmond, 1400 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 or via e-mail: mdesmond@cacities.org. Please include a brief bio. If you have questions regarding the appointment process, please call (916) 658-8224, send an e-mail to